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February 29, 2016

The Honorable Paul Ryan Speaker of the House United States House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515 The Honorable Nancy Pelosi Minority Leader United States House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan and Leader Pelosi:

On behalf of Thurgood Marshall College Fund (TMCF), whose members are the nation's 47 public Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), I would like to express our strong support for the SOAR Act (H.R. 10.) which re-authorizes the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program. We were pleased to see this legislation pass the House last year and stand ready to help move it through the Senate. There are two TMCF member schools in the Washington, D.C. area: Howard University and University of the District of Columbia. While our primary focus is higher education, we cannot ignore the direct impact that a quality K-12 education has on student achievement in college. The SOAR Act makes quality education options more affordable and accessible for low-income students, especially students of color in our nation's capital.

In 2014-2015 African American students made up over 80% of the participants in the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program (OSP). Ninety percent of OSP 12th grade students graduated from D.C. high schools. Eighty-eight percent of those students enrolled in a two-year or four-year college or university, and 100% of them are low income. OSP student demographics match the socio economic profile of many students that traditionally attend HBCUs. According to OSP, over the past four years, at least 26 percent of the students who graduated with funding from the program attended an HBCU. TMCF feels investing in these students is of critical importance because of the positive short and long-term outcomes.

TMCF also supports The SOAR Act because of its comprehensive approach to educational opportunities. The program provides \$60 million to support the D.C Scholarship program as well as D.C. public and charter schools. The scholarship funds allow D.C. students to attend private schools. Quality education options are important for all families. Giving lower income parents the same educational choices as their wealthier counterparts is the only to level the educational playing field.

We support this legislation and would like to work with you and your colleagues to see it become law. Education is a national security issue. We have to start early and make the necessary investments to give lower income students a fighting chance to get through high school and into a college or university like one of TMCF's 47 member HBCUs.

Thank you for your support.

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. President & CEO

Sincerely.